

Kyodan

News Letter

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Learning To Send Missionaries

Over the last two decades the Kyodan has been changing from a receiving church to a sending church. At present we are sharing in the support of five commissioned missionaries and another 22 are working overseas as Kyodan recommendees.

The five commissioned missionaries are MOCHIZUKI Kenichiro in Chiang Mai, Thailand, MAKINO Kazuho in Allahabad, India, ARAKAWA Yoshiharu on the island of Ponape, Carolinas, ISHIMARU Yasuki in Bolivia, and FUJIMOTO Haruyoshi in New York. Rev. Fujimoto is involved in an ecumenical metropolitan ministry to the large Japanese community in greater New York. Rev. Mochizuki will complete his service and return to Japan at the end of March.

These missionaries all exemplify our policy of doing our best to respond to the concrete requests that come to us. Even though we speak of "sending" or "commissioning" we must admit that, although we do the screening and selecting of missionaries in response to requests from churches in other countries, the bulk of their support is provided by other churches. Our share of the support of the five missionaries mentioned above is less than 20 %.

Even so the sending of missionaries to other countries is not an easy task. Our Committee for Ecumenical Ministries is in constant tension as we try to meet the challenges involved. My visits, as chairperson, to the Arakawas (Ponape) last June, and to the Mochizukis (Thailand) and Makinos (India) in January, taught me for the first time just how difficult, yet how important, the task of missionary supervision can be.

I have gained a new understanding of the complications involved in the sending of missionaries by North American churches all these years and feel a deepened sense of gratitude. I realize that, as a sending church, the Kyodan is still in its infancy.

For example, we have been sending our personnel overseas and leaving them on their own with insufficient follow-up visitation. We have failed to listen adequately to their problems and concerns. Letters are not

enough to communicate the living realities they face.

I found one missionary, sincerely endeavoring to fulfill his calling, whose efforts were being misunderstood and even blocked by the local organization and people. Explanations to the local authorities made it possible for him to put himself fully and happily into the work he felt called to do.

Another great problem is the education of missionary children. In large cities there are Japanese schools, but in rural areas it may be necessary to send the children to English language schools at great expense. Even then the children are severely handicapped when, later, they must re-enter Japanese society. One of our missionary families was forced to return to Japan after only ten years of overseas service merely because of the children's educational needs.

Health care facilities are often inadequate and so distant that the cost of hospital care becomes prohibitive.

Missionaries are often called on to use their personal funds to help people caught in emergency situations of distress. Refusal to give aid would be a contradiction of Christian love and faith, yet aid given to one person invites more requests and there is no end. The needs exceed not only the missionary's meagre resources, but those of supporting bodies in Japan as well.

Encountering these and other problems, I began to understand some of the practical complications beneath the beautiful surface of the missionary enterprise.

Nevertheless we must be faithful to our Lord's command to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth, without pause, and without putting our reliance on gold and silver; but following in the footsteps of Christ in the faith that where there is genuine need and sincere commitment God will provide the necessary resources. In this spirit our Committee for Ecumenical Ministries is determined to press on; learning and growing as we continue to send missionaries abroad.

(IWAMURA Shinji)

JAPANESE AND KOREAN CHRISTIANS PRAY TOGETHER

March 1 is a date of great historic importance for Korea and as well as for Japan. In 1919 on this day the Independence Movement broke out throughout Korea against the Japanese colonial rule. This first non-violent resistance movement was suppressed by killing about 7000 Koreans. The spirit of independence and freedom which is the message of that movement comes alive again in these years of political suppression in South Korea under President PARK Chung-Hee, who is able to continue because of support by political and economic circles in Japan and the USA, and the build-up of fear that the North Korean Communists may overrun the south.

In contrast to the optimistic view of the US State Department concerning the human rights situation in South Korea (an open letter by dissidents has been written to President Carter) the true picture shows no decrease in the arresting of people who dare to speak the truth, of torturing those who are not backed internationally, of questioning everyone who is suspected of criticizing the government, or of taking to trial and sentencing students, especially, without legal defense being required by law.

March 1 every year is the time when South Korean dissidents express their criticisms and their hope for change. March 1 also signals the time of prayer for freedom and democracy to be restored. This year many prayer meetings in Korea were stopped forcefully by police and the secret service. All leading figures were temporarily arrested or put under house arrest.

On that same day Japanese Christians and Korean Christians in Japan joined in an ecumenical prayer meeting in Shinanomachi Church in Tokyo, with about 80 people attending.

Mr. MORIOKA spoke on the spirit of the March 1 Movement 1919 and its influence and power over the freedom-lovers and seekers of true democracy for their country today. A time of prayer led by Rev. SHOJI, the new General Secretary of the NCCJ, a Kyodan Pastor, enabled Protestants and Catholics, as well as non-Christians, Japanese, Koreans and Americans, to pray with the Christians in Korea for freedom, democracy, righteousness and peace. Those attending this service on that very cold day knew that there is only this one way to go ahead: to follow Jesus Christ by telling the truth and being ready to suffer.

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY PREPARATIONS

At the first meeting of the 20th General Assembly Preparations Committee on Mar. 3 in Kyoto, USHIROKU Toshio was chosen as Chairperson and KISHIMOTO Kazuyo as secretary. It was decided to hold the assembly in Tokyo instead of Hakone where the past three "provisional" assemblies had been held. In the hopes that a large number of pastors and laypersons from Tokyo will be in attendance (as observers if not elected delegates), a large sanctuary or hall is being looked for. The tentative date is set for Oct. 24-26.

Without making any specific proposals for the program, a consensus was reached that a vision is needed which can move the Kyodan forward. While recognizing the serious problems remaining unsolved in the Tokyo and Osaka Districts it was felt that time should also be given during the assembly to hearing the testimony of persons who have labored unstintingly at the task of evangelism, often in hidden ways. These unheralded forms of witness should be considered, along with the more obvious difficulties of the past ten years, in forming a vision for the future of the Kyodan.

EVANGELISM

The major action taken by the Kyodan Committee on Evangelism, Mar. 6-7, was to decide to hold a conference of District Evangelism Chairpersons on June 20-21 in Okinawa. The date and place were set to coincide with the first observance of "Okinawa Day" on June 25, 1978, providing an opportunity for district leaders to experience first-hand the situation facing churches in Okinawa. The Conference will also deal with two other emphases: basic Kyodan mission policy and pioneer evangelism.

A report was also received on the radio evangelism pilot project being planned by JBC. In basing its future plans on the needs of local churches, JBC hopes to launch a new format with local programming in the Yamanashi area this summer.

The initiative for this program is being taken by Tokai District which will make the final decision at its up-coming district assembly.

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** KISHIMOTO Yoichi, Kyodan Vice-Moderator, visited churches and ecumenical agencies in Europe from Feb. 20 - Mar. 11, during which time he represented the Kyodan at the General Assembly of the Federation of Protestant Churches in the German Democratic Republic.

ORIENTATION FOR NEW MINISTERS

Fifty eight persons from the length of Japan gathered, Mar. 2-3, at a people's lodge in Atami for an orientation session for new ministers sponsored by the Commission on the Ministry. Among those present were 23 of the 49 applicants for the Ministerial Qualification Examinations held in Tokyo and Kyoto Mar. 14-16, four theological seminary faculty members, representatives from 15 of the Kyodan's 16 Districts, eight members of the Commission on the Ministry, and eight from the Kyodan officers and staff. This was the first session of its kind to be held by the Kyodan since the Expo '70 blow-up in 1969.



The opening worship, led by Commission Chairperson SUGAHARA Kenichi, was followed by discussions in four sub-groups, each of which chose a member for the steering committee for the conference. The questions raised in these four groups provided most of the discussion topics for the two days. Some leading questions were:

--How shall we understand the last ten years of Kyodan history and the present Kyodan situation?

--What is the Kyodan's policy and strategy for mission, larger parish evangelism?

--What is the Kyodan's policy for using its personnel resources?

--How does the Kyodan understand the relation of church and seminary?

--What is the Kyodan's policy for the continuing study and growth of its ministers?

--What are the standards and constitutional basis for the Ministerial Qualifications Examinations?

--What does it mean to be a Kyodan minister or a Kyodan church?

--What about the gap between academic studies and church faith (preaching) or personal faith?

--What about the distinction between clergy and laity?

--What is the relationship between seminary curriculum and the content of the clergy exams?

--What is the relationship between the exams and the Kyodan's confession of faith?

--What about the situations in Osaka and Tokyo Districts?

--What about the criticisms being voiced by the Kyokai Rengo? (KNL #114)

These and other questions were discussed seriously and frankly, with such wide and active participation that it was sometimes hard to tell who was orienting whom and who was getting the most out of it. Clearly

each side was receiving encouragement and challenge from the other.

In response to a question about the controversy over the Kyodan's Confession of Faith, Moderator TODA Isuke made the point that we must take great care to understand what is really being said. He urged that care be taken to distinguish "creed" and "faith" and "confession." A creed is an expression of faith in a particular historical time and place and should not be absolutized. On the other hand the faith of the church needs to be particularized as my or our confession here and now.

General Secretary NAKAJIMA recalled a traumatic experience with a flat tire in the Holland Tunnel when, having just gotten his license and knowing nothing about how to change a tire, he had to learn how to cope with the situation by facing one need at a time. He compared the Kyodan to a car driven by its riders, the local churches and districts. The headquarters staff belongs under the hood, out of sight, where it labors to keep the car going smoothly.

In the closing worship service Rev. HIGA (Okinawa District) drew from John 15:16 to emphasize that the clergy are not "choosers" but "chosen", caused to stand, and promised support. All the participants returned to their seminaries or their jobs with a deeper awareness of their mutual solidarity in Christ.

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RESPONSE FROM A READER

Dear KNL Editor:

As editor of the *Japan Christian Quarterly* I was privileged to attend as an observer the 4th Japan-Korea Church Consultation, sponsored by the NCCs in the two countries. I wish to commend your article (KNL #121) on this important consultation, and call to the attention of your readers that a translation of the Rev. Tsutomu SHOJI's presentation will appear in the Spring '78 issue of the JCQ, along with other significant articles on the theme of "Japan Korea Church relations."

At the same time, I wish to add that Korean delegate KANG Moon-kyu did not, as some KNL readers might infer from the KNL article, deal with the specifically Japan-oriented issues of church-state relations, including the emperor system and the Yasukuni Shrine problem. From his long experience as Asia Secretary for the World Student Christian Federation and his present position as General Secretary of the Korean National YMCA, he reviewed the past history of "neocolonial" relations of Asian peoples and Asian churches to their Western benefactors-controllers. He strongly emphasized that Asia churches must express their growing autonomy in their mission to Asian brothers and sisters by claiming the right and responsibility to define the Asia in which they take part and work for. This leads, he said, to two conclusions. One is that Christian mission is to the whole person, not persons reduced to economic measurements, such as GNP, or to political uses, such as military support for anti-communism or loyalty to dictatorial regimes. Secondly, Asian Christians must give attention to all of Asia. It has been common, he noted, to disregard China as if that were the "Christian thing to do." Any real definition of Asia, particularly by North-east Asians, will necessarily include China in the regional consciousness.

Mr. Kang did not offer any specific missionary strategies for immediate consideration; but he did raise important, indeed, inescapable concerns for long-range thinking on the consultation's theme of "The Task of Mission in Asia."

David L. Swain, Editor
Japan Christian Quarterly

JNAC ANNUAL MEETING TO BE HELD IN JAPAN

For the first time since its formation in 1970 the Japan-North American Commission on Cooperative Mission will hold its Annual Meeting in Japan, April 24-28. The first three days will be spent in Tokyo, at the Japan Christian Center and International House. From the evening of the 26th the scene will shift to Osaka and the Lutheran Hotel.

Participants are expected to include 18 persons from North America, five JNAC members from Japan, and several participant observers. The Japan participants will be representing the CoC/Kyodan (Kyodan, CoC-Related Schools Council, Japan Christian Social Work League) and the Korean Christian Church in Japan.

The fact that for over a year the Council of Cooperation has been unable to hold meetings, because of lack of confidence in the Moderator on the part of members of the CoC-Related Schools Council, adds a special significance to this JNAC Annual Meeting.

Taking advantage of the presence of the North American JNAC members, the Kyodan's Commission on the Mission of the Church has invited them to a frank discussion of cooperative mission policy prior to the opening of the official JNAC meeting on Apr. 25. Similar discussions are likely to be held with the Social Work League and the Schools Council on the 24th. The latter is considering applying for JNAC associate membership as an alternative to its present membership in the Council of Cooperation.

Much attention is being focussed on this unusual meeting and a variety of expectations, from various standpoints, are developing with regard to the influences it may have on cooperative relationships in the future.

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** ONO Megumu, 27, left Japan on March 14 for Ponape as a lay missionary recommended by the Kyodoan. He will be assisting Kyodan missionary ARAKAWA Yoshiharu in agricultural development, especially the breeding of pigs and chickens. Going as a volunteer at his own expense, Mr. Ono wants to "live with the people, wear the same clothes, eat the same food, and if possible enter their thinking patterns."